11.0 USER SUPPORT RESOURCES

On-line support resources are available to users for objects and windows within an application, for the application as a whole, and for the overall system.

11.1 OBJECT-LEVEL HELP

Object-level help is displayed in the message bar of a window (if one is present) and can also be accessed using context-sensitive help.

11.1.1 Message Bar Information

If a window has a message bar, object-level help (e.g., object description, format and range of acceptable values, mandatory/optional) is displayed in that area when the object has keyboard focus. See section 8.1.2.9 for additional information on message bars.

11.1.2 Context-Sensitive Help

If context-sensitive help is available, <Shift><Help> in Motif or <Shift><F1> in Windows invokes this mode and changes the pointer to a "help" shape. Users place the pointer on a window component and click BSelect to display information about the component in a pop-up Help window.   This window contains a brief description of the component and how to use it.

Motif Only: In windows with a menu bar, access to context-sensitive help is also available by selecting the On Item option in the Help menu, placing the pointer on a window component, and clicking BSelect to invoke help.

Help information is provided whenever users invoke context-sensitive help; users do not receive a "Help not available" message.

11.2 WINDOW-LEVEL HELP

Window-level help is available for every window in the application. Users access this help by activating a Help push button or menu option or by pressing <F1> (or <Help> in Motif) in an application window. The Help button or option is dimmed and unavailable for selection if help is not available; an empty help window (or one indicating that no help is available) is not displayed.

Motif Only: The Help system in CDE defines two types of help windows: a quick help window which includes a topic display area for presenting help information and an action area with one or more push buttons, and a general help window which contains a topic tree listing help topics that users can browse to find help on a subject and a topic display area. The design of quick help windows is addressed here; the design of general help windows is deferred to a future version of this document.

11.2.1 Window Design

The title of a help window, such as the one shown in figure 11-1, includes the name of the application window for which help was requested. The window is large enough to display at least ten lines of text in the display area and wide enough to display an entire line of text; the window includes scroll bars if the text exceeds the available display area. The window has an OK push button which is the default in the window and may include Previous and Next push buttons if the information can be viewed in page increments and a More push button if users can access other help resources from the window.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ ┌───────┬─────────────────────────────────────────────┬───┬───────┐ │
│ │ ▭     │         Help on Formatted Reports           │ ▫ │   □   │ │
│ ├───────┴─────────────────────────────────────────────┴───┴───────┤ │
│ │                                                                   │ │
│ │   The FORMATTED REPORTS  window allows the user to display        │ │
│ │   database information using high-quality graphics presentation.  │ │
│ │                                                                   │ │
│ │   The following buttons are available in the FORMATTED REPORTS    │ │
│ │   window:                                                         │ │
│ │   Button            Function                                      │ │
│ │   View              Displays the selected report in its own       │ │
│ │                     window.                                       │ │
│ │   Where             Displays a window that prompts you for a      │ │
│ │                     Structured Query Language (SQL) Where clause. │ │
│ │   Exit              Exits the FORMATTED REPORTS window.           │ │
│ │   Help              Displays this text.                           │ │
│ │                                                                   │ │
│ │          ┌────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌──────────┐         │ │
│ │          │   OK   │ │ Previous │ │  Next  │ │ More ... │         │ │
│ │          └────────┘ └──────────┘ └────────┘ └──────────┘         │ │
│ └───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘ │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
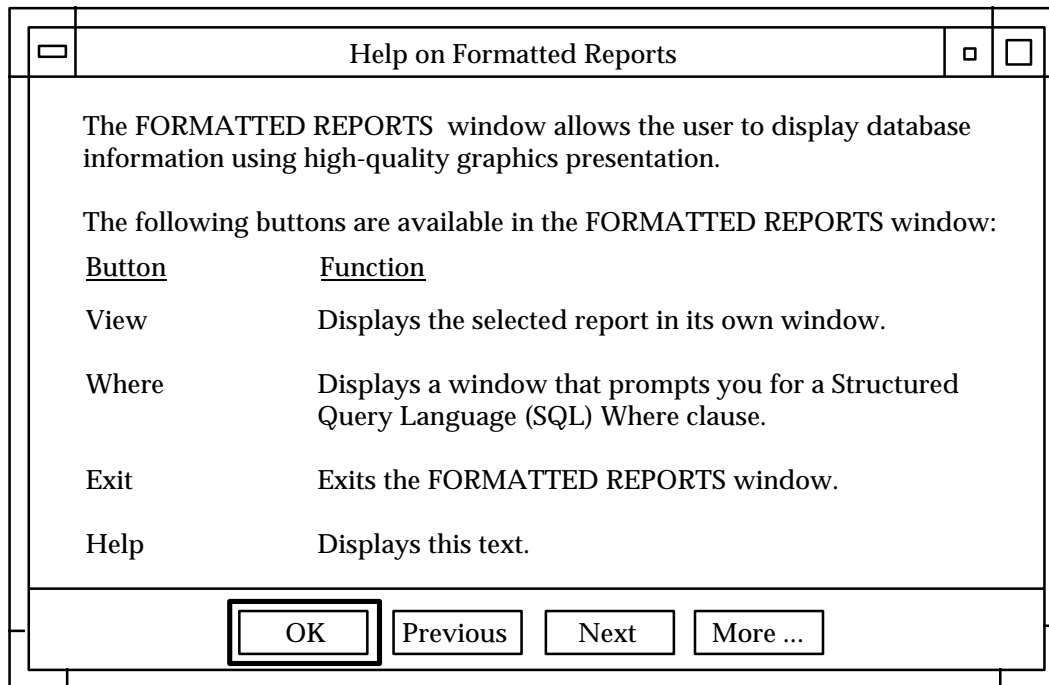
Figure 11-1. Example help window in Motif.

When a help window is displayed, it is positioned on the screen so that it does not obscure the object(s) it is describing. A help window is placed (in descending order of preference) to the right, left, above, or below the content for which help was requested. When the window is displayed, the information at the beginning of the help description is visible in the window. A help window can be moved and resized and is modeless. Users can print the content of the window, either by selecting all of the text or by marking the beginning and end of the portion of interest. A help window is removed when the parent application window is minimized or closed. When a help window is closed, focus returns to the application window for which help was requested.

11.2.2 Window Content

A help window presents only the information related to the application window for which it provides support; information on how to perform top-level tasks (i.e., require interaction with windows other than the one for which help was requested) is available in application- or system-level help support. A help window presents the following information:

• The window includes a purpose statement that describes the task(s) that users perform in the application window. Each task is described both as it relates to the functionality provided by the application and from an operational perspective. This statement can be omitted if the information is provided elsewhere in the window (e.g., in the description of actions available).

• The window explains each of the actions that can be executed in the window (excluding those pertaining to window management functions). In most cases, the actions are those available in the push buttons in the window but can also include the action options in any pull-down and pop-up menus if these are components of the window.

Depending on the size, complexity, and design of the application window to which it relates, a help window can also provide a step-by-step explanation of how users execute the task(s) presented in the window or include a More push button that provides access to this information in another help

resource. In the former case, the explanation describes both the user action, such as pressing specific keys or selecting specific controls, and the system response, such as changes in screen appearance (if any) resulting from the action.

The text in a help window is presented in mixed case, with capitalization used to emphasize or highlight significant information. Text is displayed in bulleted form, steps (e.g., in a procedure) are numbered sequentially, and explanatory information is presented in columnar form so that users can find what they are looking for quickly and easily. Graphics are used to supplement the text in a help window only if essential to understanding the task to be performed in the application window. When presenting a sequence of steps, the explanation follows the same sequence (e.g., save data before quitting; or save data, then quit the application).

11.3 APPLICATION-LEVEL HELP

Application-level help is accessed from the Help menu in the primary window(s) in the application (see section 8.1.2.3 on common menus) and may also be provided in "Read Me" files included with the application.

The remainder of this section is TBD.

11.4 SYSTEM-LEVEL HELP

System-level help is available from the CDE or Windows desktop and includes tutorials, on-line user documentation, job planning aids, and computer-based training modules. Guidelines on the conversion of existing user documentation for on-line viewing are provided in section 13.

Motif Only: Help Manager listing all of the on-line help registered on the system is available from the Front Panel. Users can access system-level support resources from this manager as well as obtain help on how to use the desktop and the Front Panel (including access to context-sensitive help on the controls, indicators, and subpanels it contains).

The remainder of this section is TBD.